



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

# News Release

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## **United States and Mexico resume voluntary interior repatriation program**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today announced that the Governments of Mexico and the United States are resuming the Interior Repatriation Program this summer to ensure the safe, effective and humanitarian return of Mexican nationals illegally in the United States to their places of origin in the interior of Mexico.

A 2004 Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Government of Mexico established the framework for the two nations to work cooperatively in safely repatriating Mexican nationals who volunteer to participate in the Interior Repatriation Program. The goals of the program are to reduce the loss of migrant life in the Arizona-Sonora corridor and to break the human smuggling cycle along the border.

For the past two summers, the U.S. and Mexican officials have developed and jointly administered this program to return nearly 35,000 Mexican nationals who voluntarily agreed to be repatriated from the Arizona-Sonora desert to their hometowns in the interior of Mexico. The program has served as a model for bi-national cooperation at all levels.

During the summers of 2004 and 2005, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) funded and managed the operations of Interior Repatriation. ICE is now responsible for funding and managing the operations of the 2006 Interior Repatriation program, which begins today and is scheduled to continue until September 30, 2006. This three-month period typically presents the most severe climate conditions for individuals crossing the Arizona-Sonora desert.

Under the initiative, Mexican nationals apprehended in Arizona are processed at centers in Nogales and Yuma, Arizona, where they are interviewed by Mexican and U.S. officials for possible inclusion in the Interior Repatriation Program. Those who volunteer to participate in the program are then flown to Mexico City and provided bus transportation to their places of origin in the interior of Mexico.

By quickly returning aliens to the interior of Mexico rather than to the Mexican border, both nations seek to save lives and discourage additional illegal border crossings through hostile, desert terrain. The United States and Mexico look forward to continued cooperation in this endeavor.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*